

Theophilus Schraff House  
1327 3rd Avenue  
Fourth Ward Neighborhood  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5837

HABS  
PA,  
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76-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THEOPHILUS SCHRAFF HOUSE

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PA.

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76 -

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Location: 1327 3rd Avenue

Date of Erection: 1872

Description: One of the earlier gambrel-front houses in the Fourth Ward survey area, the three-story, two-bay, Schraff House is tall and narrow, very different in proportion from later gambrel-front examples (see 1515 1st Ave. for comparison).

This frame dwelling is now sided in asphalt and surviving woodwork is fairly plain. A projecting cornice molding outlines the sides of the gambrel front, ending in deep returns at the base of the roof slope. A double central window in the third floor and single windows and front door below have molded surrounds. More ornamental is the original flat-roofed porch in the carpenter Gothic style. A spindled and tracery frieze joins with ornamental brackets to three turned balusters. Balusters below the rail have been replaced with horizontal siding.

History: Like 1214 3rd Ave. (HABS No. PA-5834), this house was built long before any official sale of land occurred. Although Theophilus Schraff did not purchase this unusually narrow 20' x 120' lot from John and Emma Wright until February 1883, assessment records show that "Philip Shuff" is first taxed for one lot and house as early as 1872. By 1896, Schraff was working as a janitor for the PRR; Francis Schraff, a tailor, and Frank Schraff, a laborer, also lived here. By 1900 he had a lot and house at 1327 3rd Ave., a second at 1220 2nd Ave. and a vacant lot at 1326 2nd Ave.

After its initial ownership, the Schraff House became, like many Fourth Ward structures, a rental property. It was purchased by Lawrence G. and Bertha E. Tompkins in June 1919, but they kept it only nine months, selling it in turn to Anna T. Schimming. She is not listed in the 1925 Altoona directory; in 1939 the house was occupied by renters John B. and Mary C. Steindel.

When Albert and Mary V. Zangrilli purchased the house for \$2,500 in October 1966, they likewise did not take up residence. The 1968 directory shows Charles F. Katen, a plasterer for Lithcote, and his wife, Alice M., living here. The property continued to change hands--in November 1981 it was acquired by Ronald E. and Deborah Biddle who sold it to the present owner in 1987.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888. Deed books: 53/114, 265/226, 275/186, 854/340, 1161/811, 1145/227. City directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.